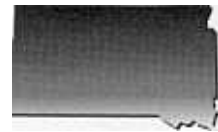




UNITED STATES SENATOR · SOUTH DAKOTA
TIM JOHNSON
N E W S R E L E A S E



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, March 2, 2004

Contact: Julianne Fisher, 202-224-1638
Noah Pinegar, 202-224-4281

Johnson Highlights Concerns with Reimportation Task Force ***Asks HHS for Details on the Task Force's Make-Up, Requests Balance***

Washington, DC –U.S. Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD) today blasted a task force assembled to study the safety of reimporting medicine from Canada, saying “the deck is stacked” in opposition to common-sense measures to rein in the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs.

“With this commission, the deck is stacked against common-sense reimportation,” said Johnson. “The White House is opposed to reimportation, and they have appointed a Chair for the task force that is opposed to reimportation from the start. With this make-up the commission is unlikely to proceed in good faith towards reining in the outrageous costs of prescription drugs.”

Johnson shared his concerns in a letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Tommy Thompson. “I would like to know the steps HHS is taking to ensure that a well-balanced task force is being assembled. There are many South Dakotans who can barely afford much-needed medications who would like to have access to prescription drugs through reimportation.”

Secretary Thompson announced creation of the task force last week. A provision in the Medicare Prescription Drug bill signed into law late last year directs Thompson to study reimportation, to be completed by December of this year. The White House has already signaled their opposition to prescription drug reimportation even though many seniors are likely to save a significant amount of money on their medications.

Johnson outlined suggestions to Thompson for providing balance to the task force. Johnson recommended that health researchers, economists, and trade experts be included in the task force to provide their insights.

Mark McClellan, Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), was selected as Chair of the task force. McClellan has repeatedly opposed reimportation, including during an October 20, 2003 address to National Conference of State Legislatures at the National Press Club in Washington, DC.

Many name-brand medications cost less in Canada:

	Price in Canada	U.S. PRICE
Prilosec 20 mg, 30 tab.	\$53.72	\$115.99
Plavix 75 mg, 30 tab	\$58.64	\$107.99
Zocor 20 mg, 30 tab.	\$61.78	\$116.99
Prevacid 30 mg, 30 tab.	\$52.01	\$117.99
Celebrex 200 mg, 30 tab	\$30.53	\$73.99

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For more information on Senator Tim Johnson visit his website at <http://johnson.senate.gov>.
To contact Senator Johnson's communications office via e-mail, write his Communications Director at Julianne_Fisher@Johnson.Senate.gov or his Deputy Communications Director at Noah_Pinegar@Johnson.Senate.gov